



February 17, 2023

Dear Members of the House Health Finance and Policy Committee,

On behalf of more than 10,000 members of the Minnesota Medical Association, I urge you to recognize that legalizing adult use of cannabis will have an impact on the health of Minnesotans. We similarly acknowledge that the current legal approach to cannabis use in Minnesota has negatively impacted opportunities for health, particularly among historically marginalized populations.

As physicians, we ask that you be mindful of the harmful and difficult lessons learned with respect to alcohol and tobacco regulation. These lessons, combined with the best available, albeit insufficient, evidence on the health effects of cannabis must inform any future Minnesota policy.

To best protect the health of Minnesotans, the MMA urges legislators to consider the following:

1. Research has consistently shown that human brain development and maturation is not complete until the age of 25. Therefore, individuals under age 25 should be prohibited from purchasing, possessing, or using cannabis or cannabis-infused products.
2. Cannabis use may increase the risk of developing psychiatric disorders, including psychosis (schizophrenia), depression and anxiety, particularly among individuals with a pre-existing genetic or other vulnerability. Public awareness of these risks is not well understood.
3. During pregnancy, cannabis use may increase the risk of low birth weight. In addition, prenatal cannabis exposure before or after maternal knowledge of pregnancy may increase the risk for psychopathology during middle childhood. Again, public awareness of these risks is limited.
4. Current addiction treatment capacity and resources are insufficient. Cannabis use may increase the risk of developing substance use disorders and further strain addiction treatment availability.
5. Children and adolescents in particular face risks from various cannabis inhalation delivery systems, ingestion of edibles, and exposure to secondhand smoke or vapor.
6. Tobacco and alcohol experiences have demonstrated the importance of strict product packaging, marketing, sales, and advertising regulations to prevent use by children, adolescents, and other at-risk individuals.
7. Ongoing monitoring of health impacts, through data collection and analysis, is essential.

Like many issues, I appreciate that this is not a simple decision – there are pros and cons of the status quo, and there are pros and cons of change. Please use what we have learned from the past and protect the health of Minnesotans now and into the future.

Sincerely,

William Nicholson, MD
President, Minnesota Medical Association